

To the Honorable Commissioners of the FCC,

I am writing to comment on Docket No. 02-277, the biennial review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules.

I urge you to retain all the FCC rules in question. These rules set limits on concentration of the broadcast industry and serve the public interest by preserving diversity of ownership in the broadcast marketplace. Specifically, these rules are: The Television-Radio Cross-Ownership Rule, The Broadcast-Newspaper Cross Ownership Ban, The National Television Ownership Rule, The Duopoly Rule for Radio, The Local Television Ownership Rule, and The Dual Network Rule.

It is our privilege as Americans to carry on informed discussion of current events, both locally and globally. Such discussion is part of the founding philosophy of this country. If the avenues for sharing information are restricted to very few, then I fear that the quality of the information presented will decay. If most or all information sources come to be controlled by a single entity, surely true debate will suffer, if not cease entirely.

As an independent media maker myself, and an employee of Democracy Now!, one of the few existing U.S. outlets for alternative news, I know firsthand the importance of freedom of expression. The ability to present information and points of view potentially challenging to audiences at large or critical of society's sacred cows and special interests, lies at the heart of the independent media maker's business. Already it is difficult to work outside the established system. If the outlets to a potential audience - be they cable channels, local television stations, or even periodicals reviewing the broadcast industry - fall into the hands of even fewer corporate owners, distributing the work of any independent artist will become much more difficult. In such an environment, commercial interests inevitably compromise the public interest. The FCC has rules limiting ownership to preserve the ecology of a healthy marketplace of ideas. If the FCC undermines this ecology by removing the rules, it undermines the future health of the marketplace of information.

Congress and the Supreme Court have long recognized that a functioning democracy depends on a media open to independent and unconventional news and varied entertainment media. Media makers working outside the corporate environment continually provide content that is so defined. If American news outlets merge together, both print and broadcast, our ability to facilitate and promote informed discussion will become severely constrained.

I urge you to rule in the public interest on this matter: please preserve the FCC's current broadcast media ownership rules.

Thank you,

Angela Alston
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Technical Director, Democracy Now!